

THE COMPANION.

No. X. WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 1828.

“Something alone yet not alone, to be wished, and only to be found, in a friend.”—SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE.

REMARKS SUGGESTED BY THE PERUSAL OF MR HAZLITT'S “PLAIN SPEAKER: OPINIONS ON BOOKS, MEN, AND THINGS.”

[We had not intended to devote the whole of our present number to a review. We prefer occupying some portion of our work at all times with subjects of more immediate interest. But to genuine readers Mr Hazlitt is always welcome, for he sets them thinking; and illness must be our excuse with less thoughtful ones, for drawing upon some reflections which he occasioned us a year ago by the perusal of these masterly essays. The same reason must excuse us this week to our correspondents.]

Mr Burke.—We have as great a regard for celebrated names, and the sanction of posterity, as our author can desire; but he does not scruple to make short work with the pretensions of Mr Fox; and for our parts we cannot but think that he over-rates Mr Burke. Nobody doubts that Burke was an extraordinary man; but we suspect that the impatience of the House of Commons under his long rhetorical speeches did not arise so much from his talking too well and too deeply, as from a doubt of his sincerity and the dislike of his attempting to lord it over them by false

pretensions. At least, if this is paying too great a compliment to the House, it is the impression made upon ourselves by Mr Burke's writings, and by the writings of his panegyrists,—Mr Prior's late biography of him included! Mr Hazlitt speaks of himself as an impartial critic of Burke, because he differs from him in opinion; but we doubt whether at bottom he has any great faith in the sincerity of Burke's opinions, and whether, above all, he does not feel a great point of contact with him in the fact of his being eminently an author, and caring for power and effect above every thing else. Mr Hazlitt sees Mr Burke making a great sensation in his time, somehow or other, whether in the House or out of the House, upon the sole strength of his willing to do it, and pressing every trick and vantage of authorship into the service, even to the imitation of the love of truth; and he rejoices in seeing the writer getting the better of Lords and Commoners and critics, and mourns with him when his right hand is not borne out in its cunning. We do not say this in depreciation of Mr Hazlitt's own love of truth, of which we conceive him to have a much greater and more *radical* portion than the converted Reformer of the King's kitchen. But we suspect even Mr Hazlitt's love of power to be more on a par with his love of truth than he may chuse to discover; and whatever there is of impartial in his adoration of Mr Burke, we can more easily lay to the account of that illustrious person's address, than to anything else. But this was little, personally speaking, compared with the effect of his authorship. We cannot agree with Mr Hazlitt in the instances he has brought forward of Mr Burke's nice tact of truth in bringing together incongruous images, and making them bear upon the question, as in the case of Windsor Castle and the "fat Bedford level," the lord and the leviathan, and Louis the XVIth's head and that of Death in Milton. We are aware of the sympathies to be found in remote ideas, and the wit and the fine wisdom thence to be deduced; but we do not think, in these instances, at all events, that Mr Burke has done it; and we think he fails, partly because he substitutes the love of power for that of truth, and partly because he has a real reverence for those very sophistications and petty lordly authorities which we are called upon, in his pages, at once to think great and little.

If Mr Hazlitt's taste were in its usual state of independence, when contemplating this wielder of sentences, he would ask the question which he instinctively puts into the mouths of readers in general, who might demand, he says, what connexion there is "between a Peer of the Realm and 'that sea-beast,' of those

'Created hugest that swim the ocean stream?'"

It is a burlesque in all but sophisticate eyes. There can be no such "enormous creature of the crown," when you come to bring the petty and the universal together in this manner, any more than a pin's head can contain an ocean. So of the likeness which Mr Burke (who was no more of a poet than orators are accustomed to be) was pleased to institute between Louis the XVIth's head, when he was king in form and appearance only, and the shadowy terror in Milton.

"What *seem'd* his head,

The *likeness* of a kingly crown had on."

"The person who heard him make the speech," says Mr Hazlitt, "said, that if ever a poet's language had been finely applied by an orator to express his thoughts and *make out his purpose*, it was in this instance. The passage, I believe, is not in his reported speeches; and I should think, in all likelihood, it 'fell still-born' from his lips; while one of Mr Canning's well-thumbed quotations out of Virgil would electrify the Treasury Benches, and be echoed"....

[We cannot finish this passage, having lent somebody the volume that contains what we had but partly copied.]

Now we have nothing to say for "the well-thumbed quotations out of Virgil;" but Mr Burke's quotation, if less trite, is hardly less obvious; and there is a ludicrous incompatibility between poor Louis's head and that of the mighty shade of the poet. All the interest of the monarch's position will not bring two such images together with safety. The quotation becomes a sort of pun; and we will venture to say, would have been thought of and rejected by fifty persons. The mere *will* to make out the highest possible case, does not of necessity make it, though Mr Burke too often thought so, and Mr Hazlitt is inclined to follow him. The passion recoils on the speaker, and leaves his will and his self-love upon his hands. Mr Burke, on one occasion, rushed out of the House

in a frenzy, foaming at the mouth, because a country-gentleman exclaimed in despair, "I hope the Honourable Gentleman does not mean to read that large bundle of papers, and bore us with a long speech into the bargain." What was this but the enormous sense of personal importance, bursting with rage at having its claims thrown back in its face, and its secret detected? The action shewed that the House guessed right, however wrong they were themselves, or clownish in the mode of opposing enquiry.

Dreams and the Arabian Nights.—"Coleridge used to laugh at me," says Mr Hazlitt, "for my want of the faculty of dreaming;" and once, on my saying that I did not like the preternatural stories in the Arabian Nights (for the comic parts I love dearly) he said, "That must be because you never dream. There is a class of poetry built on this foundation, which is surely no inconsiderable part of our nature, since we are asleep and building up imaginations of this sort half our time." I had nothing to say against it: it was one of his conjectural subtleties, in which he excels all the persons I ever knew; but I had some satisfaction in finding afterwards that I had Bishop Atterbury expressly on my side in this question, who has recorded his detestation of Sinbad the Sailor, in an interesting letter to Pope. Perhaps he too did not dream!"—Atterbury was a wit, and a swearing Bishop,—a man of the world. His opinion is worth little on such a question. That of the author of *Kubla Khan* and the *Ancient Mariner* is worth a great deal; and we are glad to have him with us. The Arabian Nights appeal to the sympathy of mankind with the supernatural world, with the unknown and the hazardous, with the possible and the remote. It fetches out the marvellous, included in our common-places. Surely this is an universal sympathy; and Mr Hazlitt, inasmuch as he is deficient in it, is not exempt from an extravagance and an error, but wanting in his portion of the common stock. Spenser and Chaucer, whom he admires so much, would, we may be sure, have been passionate admirers of the Arabian Nights. Milton would have called out for the conclusion of Sinbad the Sailor, had it been left unfinished, as he did for "the story of Cambuscan bold" with its magic ring and horse,—*a manifest Arabian Night!* Would it had been a week long!

On Reason and Imagination.—Mr Hazlitt has an excellent essay,

under this head, full of sharp quips at the Utilitarians. They overdo the matter of fact: and we think our author overdoes the matter of fancy, in devising motives and limits for them,—a hard blow from one who gives up the Arabian Nights. It is idle in the Utilitarians to set their faces, or pretend to set them, against poetry, and ornament, and delight; as if delight itself were not part of utility; but there is no fear that they can do harm with an absurdity so opposed to men's natures and inclinations; and in the meantime their exertions are calculated to do a great deal of good. They are wanted; but they can only work out a *proper* amount of counteraction to that which is found unfit for doing their work.

Application to Study.—An excellent and encouraging remark, in reference to voluminous writers and painters, that *the more people do, the more they can do*. People wonder at Shakspeare, at Walter Scott, Raphael and others; and well they may, but not on this account. "He who does nothing," says Mr Hazlitt, "renders himself incapable of doing anything; but *while we are executing any work, we are preparing and qualifying ourselves to undertake another*." There is a happy criticism on Shakspeare at p. 135, and on painters, p. 137. The observation on early rising is not so philosophical. "The stress laid upon early rising," according to Mr Hazlitt, "is preposterous. If we have anything to do," he says, "when we get up, we shall not lie in bed to a certainty. Thomson, the poet, was found late in bed by Dr Burney, and asked why he had not risen earlier. The Scotchman wisely answered, 'I had no motive, young man!' What indeed had he to do after writing the Seasons, but to dream out the rest of his existence, unless it were to write the Castle of Indolence!" Why, he had to get up early in the morning, and by that infallible rule for health and long life, double his existence and its enjoyment; for want of which he died of fat and a bad stomach. Mr Hazlitt may say he did not mean that, but was merely talking of industry and works to be done; but it is dangerous in good writers to talk in this wilful and partial manner.

The Spirit of Obligations is an admirable set of hints, none the worse for a little personal soreness, to a vast body of persons usurping the sacred name of friends. It has fallen to the lot of

none perhaps to have been more happy in realizing true friends, or more disappointed in discovering imaginary ones, than ourselves: and some of the passages in this essay gave us an ache to the very core. Here is another, very edifying: "I like real good-nature and good-will, better than I do any offers of patronage or plausible rules for my conduct in life. I may suspect the soundness of the last, and I may not be quite sure of the motives of the first. People complain of ingratitude for benefits, and of the neglect of wholesome advice. In the first place, we pay little attention to advice, because we are seldom thought of in it. The person who gives it either contents himself to lay down (*ex cathedrâ*) certain vague, general maxims, and 'wise saws,' which we knew before; or, instead of considering what we *ought to do*, recommends what he himself *would do*. He merely substitutes his own will, caprice, and prejudices, for ours, and expects us to be guided by them. Instead of changing places with us (to see what is best to be done in the given circumstances), he insists on our looking at the question from his point of view, and acting in such a manner as to please him. I have observed, that those who are the most inclined to assist others, are the least forward or peremptory with their advice." Mr Hazlitt might have added, that the greatest complainers of ingratitude (for an obvious reason) are those who treat others the worst, particularly their own servants and assistants. And he might have added further, that those who are fondest of giving their advice, or assuming the right of settling a question, are, of all persons, the worst in being advised or reasoned with, the same self-importance leading to both the consequences. A startling doubt of Mr Hazlitt's, whether "those are always the best-natured or best-conditioned men, who busy themselves most with the distresses of their fellow-creatures," we have met with before, though not on paper. Elia, that discovery was thine, if we mistake not: and no harm can it do, discovered and made manifest by such as thou! Mr Hazlitt, like his friend, does not dispute the virtue of philanthropists of this class: he doubts their sensibility, and suspects, from some instances he has seen of their mechanical and formal cut, that it might be "a mere turn of a feather, whether such people should become a Granville Sharp, or a Hubert in

‘King John;’ a Howard, or a Sir Hudson Lowe!” The query is alarming, but we need not be afraid of it. Such persons, in either case, will not be “hindered” by Mr Hazlitt; and if it is frightful to think what Mr Granville Sharp might have been made by circumstances, it is consoling to reflect what might have been done for Hubert in ‘King John.’ What we lose on one side, we gain on the other; and a large humanity is a gainer at all events. The interests of real virtue lose nothing by concessions, that diminish the belief in a fiendish hostility to her. Mr Hazlitt makes an exception, with regard to men of a sensitive temperament, like Mr Wilberforce. Of two things we may rest certain; 1st. that the love of doing good is a noble principle of action, and capable of setting to work and occupying the most masculine spirits: 2d. that they who can unite an active and unequivocal beneficence (patronizing airs apart) with a real and suffering sensibility, have in their nature something divine, and are only “a little lower than the angels.”

Old Age of Artists.—Fine tact and portrait-painting in his description of Mr Nollekens and Mr Northcote at page 210; and a good specimen of what the author can see in things. “He and Northcote” (Nollekens, who was then blind) “made a remarkable pair. He sat down on a low stool (from being rather fatigued), rested with both hands on a stick, as if he clung to the solid and tangible, had an habitual twitch in his motions and gait, as if catching himself in the act of going too far in chiselling a lip, or a dimple in a chin; was bolt upright, with features hard and square, but finely cut, a hooked nose, thin lips, indented forehead; and the defect in his sight, completed his resemblance to one of his own masterly busts. He seemed, by time and labour, to ‘have wrought himself to stone.’ Northcote stood by his side—all air and spirits, stooping down to speak to him. The painter was in a loose morning-gown, with his back to the light; his face was like a pale fine piece of colouring; and his eye came out and glanced through the twilight of the past, like an old eagle looking from its eyrie in the clouds. In a moment they had lighted from the top of Mount Cenis in the Vatican—

‘As when a vulture on Imaus bred
Flies towards the springs
Of Ganges and Hydaspes, Indian streams,’

these two fine old men lighted with winged thoughts on the banks of the Tiber, and there bathed and drank of the spirit of their youth. They talked of Titian and Bernini; and Northcote mentioned, that when Roubiliac came back from Rome, after seeing the works of the latter, and went to look at his own in Westminster Abbey, he said, ‘By G—d, they looked like tobacco-pipes.’” The familiarity of this termination does not put one out. It is a part of the humanity of which Mr. Hazlitt never loses sight, in his highest flights. For the rest, it is not extravagance; it is not mysticism, of which he is sometimes inclined to suspect himself: it is but the doing justice to that real and interior spirit of things, which modifies and enlivens the mystery of existence all about us, and which is only hidden from us by the sordid crust of our common places. There are some curious observations in this essay on the natural longevity of Royal Academicians, as opposed to the life of artists less in the receipt of custom and honour. Fuseli, by the way, is not like Ariosto. The charm of Ariosto consists in his being a natural painter, who could put on wild wings when he chose, but still took his nature with him. Fuseli was never any thing but the caricature of a man of genius.

On Envy.—A curious dialogue, real or imaginary, between the author and Mr Northcote, in which he discusses the nature of that passion, and debates whether he has felt it or not himself. Mr Hazlitt says he had a theory about Envy at one time, which he has partly given up; viz. “that there was no such feeling, or that what is usually considered as envy or dislike of real merit is, more properly speaking, jealousy of false pretensions to it.” As an instance, Mr Hazlitt tells us that he hates the sight of a certain personage for his “foolish face,” as much as for anything else. “I cannot believe that a great general is contained under such a paste-board vizard of a man. This, you’ll say, is party-spite, and rage at his good fortune. I deny it. I always liked Lord Castlereagh for the gallant spirit that shone through his appearance; and his fine bust surmounted and crushed fifty orders that glittered beneath it. Nature seemed to have meant him for something better than he was. But in the other instance, Fortune has evidently played Nature a trick,

‘To throw a cruel sunshine on a fool.’

“N. The truth is, you were reconciled to Lord Castlereagh’s face, and patronised his person, because you felt a sort of advantage over him in point of style. His blunders qualified his success; and you fancied you could take his speeches in pieces, whereas you could not undo the battles which the other had won.” Mr Hazlitt thinks he has felt very little envy, and that he is out of the way of it; the only pretension, of which he is tenacious, being that of a metaphysician. “If I have ever felt this passion at all,” he says, “it has been where some very paltry fellow has by trick and management contrived to obtain much more credit than he was entitled to. There was ———, to whom I had a perfect antipathy. He was the antithesis of a man of genius; and yet he did better, by mere dint of dulness, than many men of genius. This was intolerable. There was something in the man and in his manner, with which you could not possibly connect the idea of admiration, or of anything that was not merely mechanical—

‘His look made the still air cold.’

He repelled all sympathy and cordiality. What he did (though amounting only to mediocrity) was an insult on the understanding. It seemed that he should be able *to do nothing*, for he was nothing either in himself or in other people’s idea of him!” This is very tiresome; but it is not envy that we feel for such a man. When we envy, it is either some unattainable amount of qualities or powers we ourselves possess, or something that we desire to possess, especially when we witness the effects of it. A diligent reader of Mr Hazlitt may easily discover what it is that our man of letters, while he professes to be *totus in illis*, condescends to be envious of; and why he bestows so many alternate cuffs and plaisters on heads that are his hearty admirers. As to envy itself, what has been said of it in another periodical work is perhaps as near the truth as anything; and at any rate the view of it is good-natured, and not the less likely to be sound for that. “Even in envy,” says the work in question, “may be discerned something of an instinct of justice; something of a wish to see universal fair play, and things on a level.” We have only to regulate it, like the other passions, and see that it does not get a-head. A generous man will hasten

to pay double honour to the object of his envy; by which means he ascends to an equal height by one means, if not by another.

On Sitting for one's Picture.—A theme handled *con amore*. It was hardly necessary for Mr Hazlitt to tell the world that “the having one's picture painted is like the creation of another self; and that it is an idea, of the repetition or reduplication of which no man is ever tired, to the thousandth reflection.” Yet the self-love of people is hardly sincere on this point, and may require to have the ice broken for them. Mr Hazlitt lets us into the painting-rooms of Sir Joshua and others, and restores a world of fine company to some purpose.—Vandyke married a *kinswoman*, not of Earl Cowper, but Earl Gowrie. She was the CEnone, says Mr Hazlitt, of the beautiful picture of her, and Vandyke his own Paris. “A painter of the name of Astley married a lady (Lady Daniel) who sat to him for her picture. He was a wretched hand, but a fine person of a man, and a great coxcomb; and on his strutting up and down before the portrait when it was done, with a prodigious air of self-satisfaction, she observed, “If he was so pleased with the copy, he might have the original.” It was something after the same fashion that Wycherley married Lady Drogheda. Coming into a bookseller's shop to ask for the Plain Dealer, a friend of Wycherley's pushed the author himself forward, and said, “There is the Plain Dealer for you, Madam.” She took him at his friend's word, or rather at her own; and married the author that had painted her portrait, without knowing it, among his fine ladies.

Whether Genius is conscious of its powers.—Mr Hazlitt, at all events, can hardly be said to be unconscious of his. He is only anxious that we should not suppose him capable of equalling himself with the great names of past times; and he adds a caution to others, to practise a like modesty. We apprehend there are very few who will misbehave themselves in this particular; but we would caution them, for our parts, how they said much about it. In the course of the essay, our author alludes to his politics, and justly denounces the silly and slavish hirelings who have attempted to run him down. We conceive, however, that he is mistaken, when he represents himself as the only wise lover of liberty for adhering to Bonaparte, when the Allies were to be unmasked.

Very foolish were they who put any faith in the Allies; but the interests of freedom were not to be identified with those of Bonaparte, who was a turncoat from the cause, as it was; or rather never entered sincerely into it; and who would most probably have done nothing more than give rise to a new dynasty of the old leaven. Freedom will have gained more, after all, from the weakness of the lesser men, than it would from the strength of the greater one.

On the Pleasures of Hating.—A startling title! A celebrated writer, famous for his moods and inconsequentialities, once asked us, if we had not great pleasure in hating somebody. We said, no; for it only took a little reasoning on circumstances and human nature, to find there was no ground for it. Mr Hazlitt suspects, that life would be a dull business without the contrast and gusto of evil; and has repeated, in several parts of his writings, that no man can be a good reprovcr who is not a good hater. It is difficult to reconcile propositions of this nature. What the use of reforming may be, if the pleasures of evil and of hating are to be done away, it is not easy to see. Or are we to take care that a proper quantum be preserved, purely to oblige the reformers? The existence of hate and evil may have been necessary, perhaps even for the production of a better good than could have existed without its help; but the necessity of the continuance of hate and evil for ever we cannot believe, unless somebody shall be able to prove to us, that a cricketer on a village green does not procure as much amusement and excitement as enable him to exist happily from day to day. Give a man reasonable and wholesome employment for the morning, let him breathe amply the fresh air, and have his due portion of exercise and entertainment the rest of the day; and we undertake for him, that he will desire none of the sophisticate helps to a relish of existence, arising from hate and evil. As to hate, as a means of opposing evil, the world have had enough of it. A gallant example of the reverse,—we mean, of the refusal to hate, accompanied with an energy of character that might have hated,—is of more use to society, after all it has suffered and learnt, than any further bandying and reproduction of dispute: and this it is that reconciles us to the toleration of such a fellow as

Ferdinand the Seventh: for though he is a nuisance for the time being, and one cannot help feeling impatient at his repeated and incorrigible enormities, there is more security for the growth and eventual reign of freedom in the general recognition of a calm and liberal principle of action, which makes allowance, as it goes, for the worst actions of its enemies, than in angry and vindictive impulses, which are too apt to bear in them the seeds of new error. Mr Hazlitt says in another essay (Vol. II, p. 303) that he "could make the world good, wise, happy tomorrow, if, when made, it would be contented to remain so without the alloy of mischief, misery, and absurdity; that is, if every possession did not require the principle of contrast, contradiction, and excess, to enliven and set it off and keep it at a safe distance from sameness and insipidity." It may be so:—it is *possible*:—at all events, it is a comfort to think that evil may be a necessary ingredient in good itself. But as we cannot be sure of this,—as it is possible that evil may only be an incitement to us to obtain more good than we should have got at without it, as we suffer quite enough misery to be very willing and anxious to dispense with it, and as the endeavour to get rid of it is at all events a noble principle of action, we cannot do better than go on with our efforts to that purpose: nor, except as a matter of temper, do we very well understand how it is that Mr Hazlitt advocates reformation at one moment, and gives it a blow on the cheek the next. One set of reformers does not please him; another pleases him still less, perhaps with justice; but the worst of it is, that when he meets with a third, who seem to advocate all that he desires, who are for making the world as good, wise, and happy, as he would wish to see it on a summer's day, and admit the full right and title of wisdom and human nature to all that very delight and ornament which he is so angry with more formal understandings for thinking to leave out of the question, these he either treats with contempt or passes over in silence, as if nine-tenths of the wishes and hopes which he himself has expressed in behalf of mankind, were worth nothing. This may be despair; but it is hardly consistency, and certainly not help. We have a high opinion of Mr Hazlitt's independence of character, and disinterestedness; but we should have a higher, or at least be more certain of it, if

he mixed less moodiness with his love of truth, and shewed himself as unbribable by his own spleen and impatience, as he is by what made his Lake friends apostates.

On Egotism.—"Personal vanity," says Mr Hazlitt, "is incompatible with the great and the *ideal*. He who has not seen, or thought, or read of something finer than himself, has seen, or read, or thought little; and he who has, will not be always looking in the glass of his own vanity. Hence poets, artists, and men of genius in general, are seldom coxcombs, but often slovens; for they find something out of themselves better worth studying than their own persons. They have an imaginary standard in their minds, with which ordinary features (even their own) will not bear a comparison, and they turn their thoughts another way. If a man had a face like one of Raphael's or Titian's heads, he might be proud of it, but not else; and even then he would be stared at as a *non-descript* by "the universal English nation." Few persons who have seen the Antinous or the Theseus will be much charmed with their own beauty or symmetry; nor will those who understand the *costume* of the antique, or Vandyke's dresses, spend much time in decking themselves out in all the deformity of the prevailing fashion. A coxcomb is his own lay-figure for want of any better model to employ his time and imagination upon."

Our author, who always writes uneasily on this point, and with a kind of self-seeking, proceeds to observe, that "there is an inverted sort of pride, the reverse of that egotism that has been above described, and which, because it cannot be everything, is dissatisfied with everything. A person who is liable to this infirmity 'thinks nothing done, while anything remains to be done.' The sanguine egotist prides himself on what he can do or possesses; the morbid egotist despises himself for what he wants, and is ever going out of his way to attempt hopeless or impossible tasks. That must be a wonderful accomplishment indeed which baffles their skill.—I have known persons of this stamp, who, *with every reason* to be satisfied with their success in life, and with the opinion entertained of them by others, despised themselves because they could not do something which they were not bound to do, and which, if they could have done it, would not have added

one jot to their respectability, either in their own eyes, or those of any one else, the very insignificance of the attainment irritating their impatience; for it is the humour of such dispositions to argue, 'If they cannot succeed in what is trifling and contemptible, how should they succeed in anything else?' If they could make the circuit of the arts and sciences, and master them all, they would take to some mechanical exercise, and if they failed, be as discontented as ever. All that they can do, vanishes out of sight the moment it is within their grasp, and 'nothing is but what is not.' A poet of this description is ambitious of the thews and muscles of a prize-fighter, and thinks himself nothing without them. A prose-writer would be a fine tennis-player, and is thrown into despair because he is not one, without considering that it requires a whole life devoted to the game to excel in it; and that, even if he could dispense with this apprenticeship, he would still be just as much bound to excel in rope-dancing, or horsemanship, or playing at cup and ball like the Indian jugglers, all which is impossible. This feeling is a strange mixture of modesty and pride. We think nothing of what we are, because we cannot be everything with a wish. Goldsmith was even jealous of beauty in the other sex, and the same character is attributed to Wharton by Pope:—

'Though listening senates hung on all he spoke,
'The club must hail him master of the joke.'

Players are for going into the church—officers in the army turn players. For myself, do what I might, I should think myself a poor creature unless I could beat a boy of ten years old at chuck-farthing, or an elderly gentleman at piquet."

Reader, believe him not! At least, if he thought himself a poor creature, he would think others a great deal poorer, who could neither play at chuck-farthing, nor write good prose essays! The whole of this reasoning is imperfect, and merely goes to say the worst of one species of egotism, and the best of another. It is a trick played by the world in general in behalf of the prevailing sort of egotism, which is not that which has a gallant air with it, and some obvious pretension to go upon. There are more solemn coxcombs than lively ones, at least in England; because there are more who have little to say for themselves, more less gifted by nature with external advantages and a lively current of blood. For our parts, vanity being a good-natured gift of providence to keep men in heart with themselves, we have sometimes suspected, however it may be more or less obvious, that all men are equally vain; though all men, for that very reason, have not an equal inclination to think so. At all events, we are certain that a great deal ought to come under the head of vanity which does not pass for such; and that if there is a bright or modest side on which to look at what our author calls an inverted egotism, it may be said in behalf of the more contented-looking coxcomb, that he does not value and set off his own figure or accomplishments because he

can think of nothing beyond them (any more than Mr Hazlitt is bound to think his sentences finer than Bacon's, because he thinks well of what he writes;) but because, as a matter of taste, he includes what he can do himself in his general regard for the graceful and ornamental, and because he has something about him, either in air, or shape, or vivacity of blood, which enables him to do so to advantage. We doubt whether there have been more men of genius slovens, than coxcombs. There may have been more slovenly authors, speaking in the lump; but authors of genius, and other men of genius, have, we suspect, had too strong a sense of their personality, not excluding a strong sense of other and higher things, but including and in a manner connected with it, to give into that species of sordid desperation: for such it is, unless there is a total want of thought on that and every other subject. Mr Hazlitt himself has set down Lord Byron for a coxcomb; Sir Philip Sidney for a coxcomb, Vandyke, and we believe, Raphael, for coxcombs. It is certain that all these men of genius were the reverse of slovens. Neither was Rubens a sloven; nor Michael Angelo, though no fop; nor Milton; nor, if we are to believe what was said of his fitness to grace the highest company, Shakspeare. The slovens, as a general rule, are to be sought among the inferior ranks, half wits and whole scholars; secluded bookmen; those who have come late from the country, or been brought up among the clownish; authors who have not succeeded; or who from some ill-contrivance on the part of their progenitors have about them an uncouthness, inaptitude, or physical deficiency not to be got rid of. Porson was a sloven. Vincent Bourne was a sloven. Boyse was a sloven. But we are not aware of a single great name, at least not for genius and invention, to be added to the list. Newton and Bacon were not slovens. Addison and Steele were not. Voltaire was not. Bonaparte was no sloven, nor Cæsar; though Charles the Twelfth was. Cæsar was a fop. One thing we can affirm, from undeviating experience; that nobody, man of genius or not, ever possesses an advantage, or thinks he possesses, which he does not contrive to set off, or make others sensible of, in some way or other. They do this in different ways, to be sure; and by the unobserving, the vanity may sometimes be taken for modesty, as it is intended to be taken. The French vanity, and the Quaker vanity, are an old story. Thus one man blossoms forth into a frill and ruffles; another retreats into the simplicity of a plain shirt; and like the girl in Virgil, in retreating, wishes to be observed. The frill is a mightier thing to him, than to the other man, for it is worthy his self-denial. He thinks it a great business to give up so small a matter. The same person will put on sober colours, not because he is not alive to the superiority of the others, but to shew his own superiority to those who wear them. Where he does not carry this announcement along with him, in necessary connexion with his appearance, you will find him like other men; as sumptuous

as he can be, for instance, in his house, his horses, or his pictures. His house may want adorning; and besides, has no other way of shewing itself worthy of its inhabitant:—he himself can dispense with ornament, for he is not to be mistaken. Then as to the inverted egotism that Mr Hazlitt speaks of, we have known a person of that temperament very ready to shew off a fine head of hair. He certainly did not cut it off, because he could not play on the piano-forte; though he did, when it began to fail him. He is now, we believe, all for energy of countenance.* Egotists of this description do not think nothing of a talent, because they possess it; and so, for that reason, impatiently desire the possession of others. Their impatience is in direct proportion to the opinion they have of what they possess; and Mr Hazlitt, in this contradictory essay, has said as much, when he represents them as thinking any accomplishment “wonderful indeed, that baffles their skill.” They are not, it is true, as easily satisfied as egotists of the more sanguine description; but to attribute this to modesty, is to confound the impatience of a will royal with that of a beggar, and then give it the advantage over the gaiety of a court page. Queen Elizabeth could not bear that a young lady at her court should have a dress which particularly struck her royal fancy. She contrived to get possession of it, wore it though it did not fit her, and when she found this out, still would not let the other have it. This was not because she did not think well of the thousand other dresses which she had in her wardrobe, and which she delighted in putting on: it was merely because she, who possessed all those dresses, and had pampered her will with them, could not bear to think that any body else should compete with her in a single gown. Her knowledge of the existence of this gown, or of its having existed, did not hinder her from showing off, till her dying day, in all the other colours of the rainbow. Had she contented herself with the dress when she got it, and been willing to forego all the rest of her wardrobe, a case might have been made out for the little opinion entertained of one’s possessions; but when we speak of our readiness to give up those, we speak of what, we know, will not and cannot happen, and are only indulging our egotism the more by that very pretension.

* So superior, nevertheless, do we think this person to his foibles, and so capable of relishing a truth for its own sake, that when a friend, to whom we read this passage, said he would be very angry with it, we exclaimed, “Not he: he will be delighted!” Nobody is implacable at having his self-love disturbed, but he who has nothing else to repose upon.

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